

410 Poesi Canadian No 3

TO

Madam the Superiress

— OF THE —

CONGREGATION DE NOTRE DAME,

Who so faithfully walks in the footsteps of her
distinguished Foundress,

MARGARET BOURGEOIS,

These lines are most respectfully offered:

— BY —

MISS SHINE,

Enfant de Marie de la Congregation de Notre Dame

Why meet we here to-day? Why gather thus,
The old and young—the parent and the child?
Is it a festal day? Has some bright beam
Of Heaven's glory fallen on our land—
That midst the boding cry of warlike men,
Our hearts are gladsome, and our souls at peace?
— Go—ask the countless Hurons, who have slept
Their last sleep 'neath the banner of the cross,
Ask of the wild Iroquois—ask of the
Sainted dead. What scene is this festive scene?

Like the soft breath of summer winds,
Of love we love, answer floats around.

'Tis now, more than two hundred years ago,
Was born in sunny France one, whose name
We celebrate to-day. Thrice favored child!

See how the saving waters bathed thy brow,
Thou Jesus claimed thy pure young infant heart.

Margaret Bourgeois! See from earth we hail thee,
Blessed thrice—in childhood, youth and age.

Yes, she was blest. Her infancy but passed,
And look, how cluster round her,—youthful crowds,
Their prattling tongues, speak sweetly of the Babe,
Who came on earth, a little child for them,
And at His name, each baby head bows low.



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Thus, childhood passes. In the walks of men,
She moves an angel; pure and undefiled.
She hath drunk deep of sorrow's bitter cup.
A mother's loss she wept; and few years pass,
When Death, again a cherished parent takes,
But o'er the soft hands of his patient child,
Had closed those loving eyes, the father knew,
That to the God who claimed it, she had giv'n
Her soul's pure love,—her girlhood's spotless heart.
And thus it chanced to pass; if chance there be,
In aught ordained by Him, who rules the world.

It was the Sunday of the Rosary,
And in procession meet, St. Dom'nick's sons,
Were chaunting praise to Her, their founder loved.
Soon were they joined by the fair city's youth;
And slowly passed the Church of Notre Dame,
Where in a niche the noted statue stood,
Of Mary—bearing in her arms her Infant Son.
As Marg'ret walks along, her eyes are raised,
To the mild face, she oft hath watched before.
Why starts she? Is there aught to frighten her,
No! no! for joy beams from every feature.
But she walks as in a dream! See she falls,
With lifted earnest gaze, at Mary's feet.
"Ah Mother! thou couldst tell us! thou dost know,
What means that rapturous face, those radiant eyes—
Thou must have smiled on her, sweet Virgin Queen!
And she nigh died of love! as she, we ask,
With yearning hearts that we may one day die!
Thou must have whispered to her inmost soul,
And it nigh fled away, with thy sweet breath,
Back to the Infant God, who looked on her
With eyes Divine, too bright, for mortal's gaze!"
— Long knelt she thus, and when at length she rose,
A change had settled on her youthful face.
Ah Marg'ret thou hast been too near to God,
To care for earth again or earthly garb,
Which thou hadst until now, so dearly prized.

Thus came Religious call: and from that hour,
One thought alone possessed that Christian maid,
Now in a cloister bearing "Mary's" name,
She could devote her youth, her life, to God,
There as daughters now, she earnest seeks,
Not there! not there! does Heaven's finger point!
Vainly she strives a holy house to found,
Still! still! her guiding star moves slowly on—
"Where rests it?" See! far on in years to come—
It hovers o'er a stable: as of old,
It marked the spot, where Mary would be found.
'Tis not o'er thy beloved France it rests.
No, maiden! 'Tis where blood is daily shed,
By those who know not of the Christian's God—
The land of snows;—where the savage Iroquois,
Loud yell the war-hoop, scatt'ring death around.
Who, now comes from wild Canadian forests?
D: Matouneuve, we know thy stately step,
"What seekest thou? more men, to lose their lives
In savage combat with the deadly foe?"

Or dost thou come to rest thee from thy toils?—
 Not so!—He seeks kind woman's ministry,
 To labour for the little Indian child.
 He seeks for woman's heart and woman's hand—
 To carry out the work by man begun.
 "Now is thy time, Troyes daughter! come, behold—
 One from a city bearing *Mary's* name—
 Ha! dost thou know him? Why that stifled scream?"
 "It is! It is! I've seen him in my dream!"
 "And wilt thou, Marg'ret, leave all those so loved;
 "Whom thou hast saved, from dangers worse than
 death?"
 "Have home, and country, lost all ties for thee,
 "That thou wilt leave them, for that icy clime?
 "Too much we fear, the hour now hath come
 "When thou must bid adieu to Fatherland."

'Twas even so, and but a short time passed,
 When voice of Priest and Pastor bade her speed
 E'en to the city where we now are met,
 But e'er she starts, dark Satan's plots are laid,
 And fear is cast into that virgin heart:
 Fear, oh not for life, but for that honour,
 Which woman values far, far more than life.
 Have courage maiden! He whom Mary sends,
 Is e'en as spotless in his life as thou!
 Dost thou forget, a beauteous Angel stands,
 By night and day, forever, at thy side.
 Thou canst not see,—but in his hand he bears
 A golden lily—type of thy pure soul.
 Fear not! he watches, and he'll guard thee well,
 And now in silent night she humbly prays,
 When—lo! an answer to her prayer quick comes.
She—who had won her by a smile, now stands
 Before her chosen one, and with a voice,
 Like Heaven's sweetest music, softly spoke—
 "*Go! for I will never abandon thee!*"
 Where now the terrors of the trembling girl?
 They've passed away—her own loved home is left,
 And soon she stands upon Canadian shores.

Oh think not that her sacrifice was small!
 Can there be aught that clings to us like Home!
 The exile from the sunny shores of France,
 Or Erin's fields of bright and matchless green,
 Think you, he never yearns to see again,
 The home wherein his boyhood's days were spent?
 That mem'ry brings not often back to him,
 The hawthorn hedge! the primrose wild and sweet?
 Does he not hear the little robin's chirp
 And seek to find, the four-leaved-shamrock rare?
 How often doth the perfume of a flow'r,
 Bring a wild rush of scenes and faces gone,
 He hears again, a father's earnest voice;
 A mother's hand, is resting on his brow;
 And hark! that peal of merry laughter loud,
 That comes, from childhood's pure and guileless heart,
 —Where are the friends of boyhood staunch and true.
 The sister, brother, of his early youth?
 Oh, mem'ry bitter, are the silent tears,
 Thou forest, e'en from eyes that seldom weep.

But, turn we now, to where in forests dark,
 A human Angel, tends to every woe.
 The wounded soldier, knows what blessed hand,
 Has soothed his pain, and lulled him into sleep;
 The Huron loves the patient dark-robed nun,
 Who speaks to him of One, who died for all;
 The little Indian children gather round,
 And call her 'Mother'—in their native tongue;
 E'en the dark foe, the savage Iroquois
 Have brought to her, their little ones to cure.
 — No home has she, for many weary years;
 Until at length young kindred spirits came—
 From far and near—seeking to be enrolled,
 In her blest cause. No house is there for them,
 But later on, a little stable poor,
 Is given unto Marg'ret for her flock.
 Did not the star shine brightly on that night,
 Thou faithful watcher? Now thou hast thy wish,
 In very truth, thou'rt likened unto her,
 Who, in an humble stable, gave to man,
 The world's Redeemer—Jesus our King—
 For five-and-forty years spent in this land,
 Thou laboredst Mother, for the future good
 Of Canada's fair daughters. See! the fruit,
 Of all thy weary days, thy restless nights!
 The grain of mustard seed has spread its roots;
 And forty holy houses bear the name,
 Of "La Congregation de Notre Dame!"
 Thou, their great foundress—"Marguerite Bourgeois!"
 Whose death was e'en another act of love!
 What countless souls, oh Mother, hast thou saved;
 What thousands hast thou called to serve their God,
 Far from the world's seductive, weary ways—
 Reaping a precious harvest, all for Him
 Who shed His Blood on Golgotha for them.
 Thy eighty years of human life have passed,
 But yet enshrined in casket rich and rare,
 Thy heart, in yonder cloister, dwells with us.

Mother! from earth see thy children all hail thee
 As blessed in childhood, in youth and in age!
 Long—may thy virtues, shine brightly around us,
 Thy name be engraved on fond memory's page.

J. D. S.

VILLA MARIA, Jan. 12, 1862.

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